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QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

Report of the Special Political Committee

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The item entitled "Questions relating to information" was included in the provisional agenda of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly in accordance with Assembly resolution 46/73 of 11 December 1991.

2. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 18 September 1992, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include the item in its agenda and to allocate it to the Special Political Committee.

3. The Special Political Committee considered the item at its 18th to 23rd meetings, held between 16 and 20 November 1992 (see A/SPC/47/SR.18-23).

4. The Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Committee on Information; 1/

(b) Report of the Secretary-General (A/47/462 and Corr.1);

(c) Letter dated 6 February 1992 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and transmitting the documents of the Sixth Islamic Summit Conference, held at Dakar from 9 to 11 December 1991 (A/47/88-S/23563);

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/47/21).

(d) Letter dated 6 March 1992 from the Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and transmitting the Communiqué of the Third Inter-sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, held at Kingston on 19 February 1992 (A/47/120).

5. At its 2nd meeting, on 9 October, the Committee decided to establish an open-ended working group on questions relating to information to be chaired by one of the Committee's Vice-Chairmen.

6. At its 18th meeting, on 16 November, the Committee heard introductory statements by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information of the Secretariat and by the Acting Chairman of the Committee on Information. The Director of the Liaison Office of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization also made a statement (see A/SPC/47/SR.18).

II. CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS

A. Draft resolutions A/SPC/47/L.9 and L.10

7. At the 19th meeting, on 17 November, the Chairman of the Special Political Committee drew attention to two draft resolutions submitted by the Acting Chairman of the Committee on Information on behalf of its Bureau and circulated as documents A/SPC/47/L.9 and L.10 on 13 November.

8. At the 23rd meeting, on 20 November, the Chairman of the Special Political Committee drew the Committee's attention to document A/SPC/47/L.13, which contained the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/SPC/47/L.10.

9. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolutions A/SPC/47/L.9 and L.10*, without a vote (see para. 11, resolutions A and B).

B. Candidacy for membership in the Commitee on Information

10. At the 23rd meeting, on 20 November, the Chairman drew attention to paragraph 80 of the report of the Committee on Information, 1/ in which the Committee on Information decided, by consensus, to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft decision to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 79 to 81 members and to appoint the Republic of Korea and Senegal as members of the Committee. At the same meeting, the Special Political Committee decided, without a vote, to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of that decision (see para. 12).

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* Reissued for technical reasons.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE

11. The Special Political Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

Questions relating to information

A

Information in service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information, 2/

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information, 3/

Urges that all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethnical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources of and their free access to information, recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process", should:

(a) Cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/47/21).

3/ A/47/462 and Corr.1.

(b) Ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

(c) Provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

(d) Enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) Aim, in addition to bilateral cooperation, at providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public, private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) Provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 4/ which should support both public and private media.

4/ See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Records of the General Conference, Twenty-first Session, vol. I, Resolutions, sect. III.4, resolution 4/21.

B

United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information, 2/

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information, 3/

Reaffirming the primary role of the General Assembly in elaborating, coordinating and harmonizing United Nations policies and activities in the field of information,

Also reaffirming that the Secretary-General should ensure that the activities of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, as the focal point of the public information tasks of the United Nations, are strengthened and improved, keeping in view the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the priority areas defined by the General Assembly and the recommendations of the Committee on Information,

1. Decides to consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main subsidiary body mandated to make recommendations relating to the work of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat;

2. Calls upon the Secretary-General, in respect of United Nations public information policies and activities, to implement the following recommendations in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, and in this regard to ensure that the Department of Public Information:

(a) Continues to disseminate information about the activities of the United Nations in coordination with the information services of other relevant agencies in accordance with the United Nations medium-term plan, the programme budget and their relevant revisions, pertaining, inter alia, to:

(i) International peace and security;

(ii) Disarmament;

(iii) Peace-keeping operations and peacemaking;

(iv) Decolonization and the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the light of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism;

(v) The promotion and protection of human rights and in that context the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights;

(vi) The elimination of all forms of racial discrimination;

(vii) The advancement of status of women and their role in society;

(viii) The promotion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(ix) Problems of economic and social development, as well as international economic cooperation aimed at resolving external debt problems;

(x) The least developed countries;

(xi) The environment and development;

(xii) The elimination of foreign occupation;

(xiii) The campaign against terrorism in all its forms in line with General Assembly resolution 40/61 of 9 December 1985;

(xiv) International efforts against drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking;

(xv) Crime prevention and criminal justice;

(xvi) Support for the New Agenda of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 and for the tremendous efforts of the African countries aimed at recovery and development, as well as the positive response by the international community to alleviate the serious economic situation prevailing in Africa;

(xvii) International efforts towards the total eradication of apartheid and support for the establishment of a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa and, where necessary, the role of the United Nations in this context;

(xviii) United Nations activities pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine in particular, also including current developments in that region and the ongoing peace process;

(b) Provides the necessary level of information support for the activities of the United Nations in situations requiring immediate and special response;

(c) Continues its efforts at promoting an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations system among the peoples of the world and at strengthening the positive image of the system as a whole;

(d) Continues its efforts to ensure timely production and dissemination of its mandated publications, in particular the UN Chronicle, the Yearbook of the United Nations, Development Forum and Africa Recovery, and continues to

maintain consistent editorial independence and accuracy in reporting all the material that it produces, taking necessary measures to ensure that its output contains adequate, objective and equitable information about issues before the Organization, reflecting divergent opinions where they occur;

(e) Submits a report on continuous and major publications to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session, providing the following details:

(i) The list of publications and their circulation figures;

(ii) Their cost;

(iii) The original language versions and the languages into which the publications were translated;

(iv) Target audiences, including, where possible, the intended end-use of the specific products;

(f) Continues its briefings, assistance and orientation programmes for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries focused on United Nations-related issues;

(g) Provides, on the basis of its activities, information to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization about new forms of cooperation, at the regional and subregional levels, for the training of media professionals and for the improvement of the information and communication infrastructures of developing countries;

(h) Continues its policies of cooperation with all agencies of the United Nations system, in particular with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization;

(i) Continues its policies of cooperation with the news agencies in and of the developing countries, in particular the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries;

3. Requests the Secretary-General, in the light of the increasing demands now placed on the Department of Public Information in relation to media coverage of United Nations activities, to provide at the fifteenth session of the Committee on Information an assessment regarding:

(a) Any measures considered appropriate to ensure that the working facilities provided for the media are fully adequate to meet present and future needs and, in this context, to consult with the Bureau of the Committee, spokespersons of the regional groups, the Group of 77 and China, in relation to the implementation of any significant measures in this regard;

(b) The consideration of a greater framework of coordination within the Department of Public Information in relation to the provision of facilities

and services for the media, such as the work of the Executive Media Service and the provision of accreditation services;

4. Requests, in this context, the Secretary-General to direct the Publications Board to develop criteria and review all publications and proposals for publications to ensure, inter alia, that each publication fulfils an identifiable mandate and need, is timely, does not duplicate other publications inside or outside the United Nations system, and is cost-effective, and that before the publication is printed, it satisfies the criteria on the basis of which it was authorized, and to report thereon to the Committee on Information;

5. Reaffirms the importance attached by Member States to the role of United Nations information centres in effectively and comprehensively disseminating information about United Nations activities and the optimization of the resources allocated to the Department of Public Information;

6. Calls upon the Secretary-General to submit a detailed and comprehensive report on his plan of integrating United Nations information centres with other United Nations offices, while maintaining the functional autonomy of the United Nations information centres and emphasizing that they should be fully operational, as provided for in relevant resolutions, to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session for its consideration of the different options available in this regard; in this context, consultations should take place on this matter through the informal mechanism composed of the Bureau of the Committee on Information and the spokespersons of regional groups, the Group of 77 and China, as was established in paragraph 1 (s) of General Assembly resolution 46/73 B of 11 December 1991;

7. Reaffirms the role of the General Assembly in relation to the opening of new United Nations information centres and invites the Secretary-General, as well, to make such recommendations as he may judge necessary regarding the establishment and location of new United Nations information centres;

8. Calls upon the Secretary-General to study ways and means of redressing differences in the allocation of resources, in particular the differences of support, in relation to the financing of United Nations information centres in various countries and to report to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session;

9. Notes the substantial contribution by the Government of Poland and requests the Secretary-General to finalize, in consultation with the Polish authorities, arrangements for a United Nations information component in Warsaw;

10. Calls upon the Secretary-General to implement fully its recommendations contained in resolution 46/73 B, including paragraphs 1 (l) and (m), regarding the establishment of a United Nations information centre in Sana'a, Yemen, as well as the reactivation of the United Nations information centre in Tehran and the enhancing of the information centres in Dar es Salaam, Dhaka and Bujumbura;

11. Encourages enhanced cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the University for Peace in Costa Rica as a focal point of promoting United Nations activities and disseminating United Nations information materials;

12. Takes note of the requests by Bulgaria, Gabon and Haiti for information components;

13. Calls upon the Secretary-General to enhance the efficiency of and ensure full programme delivery of all segments currently produced by all regional radio units in the Department of Public Information;

14. Encourages the Department of Public Information to take into account, especially in the area of electronic media production, the various standards and systems used around the world, bearing in mind the need for harmonization and efficiency;

15. Calls upon the Secretary-General, as of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, to make every effort as a matter of particular urgency to create conditions and to make them more conducive to achieving parity by appropriate utilization of existing equipment in the press coverage of meetings in English and French;

16. Decides, as of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, on the publication in the Arabic and Spanish languages, after each annual session of the General Assembly, of the press release containing the resolutions and decisions adpoted by the General Assembly and the results of the voting through reallocation of resources from the budget of the Department of Public Information;

17. Invites Member States to submit to the Secretary-General, by 1 January 1993, observations and suggestions on ways and means of furthering the development of communications infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with a view to consolidating recent experience in the field of international cooperation aimed at enabling them to develop their own information and communication capacities, freely and independently, and further requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session;

18. Decides on procedural grounds to refer to the Economic and Social Council for its consideration resolution 26 C/resolution 4.3 adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at its twenty-sixth session and contained in the relevant note by the Secretary-General; 5/

5/ A/SPC/46/3.

19. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session in 1993 on the results of the implementation of a system-wide information programme for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;

20. Also requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session in 1993 and to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session in 1993, on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution as well as in resolution 46/73;

21. Requests the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session;

22. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its forty-eighth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

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12. The Special Political Committee also recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

DRAFT DECISION

Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information

The General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Special Political Committee, decides:

(a) To increase the membership of the Committee on Information from seventy-nine to eighty-one members;

(b) To appoint the Republic of Korea and Senegal as members of the Committee on Information.